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ody ("charms") were carried at the very head of the column by a man chosen because he had a fortunate name such as *Vanona* ("successful"), *Ndrembita* ("one who finishes what he has begun") or *Tongalaza* ("honorable"). It was forbidden for anyone to pass this man on the march. The *ody* were special ones carried on all war parties and their power increased with success. At night the *ombiasy* stayed with them in a special hut. After the *ody* marched the *fanalolahy*, then the king and *ombiasy*, and last the ordinary soldiers. When they had come close to the enemy village they went into camp and sent forward three or four scouts to reconnoiter the position. These reported to the *ombiasy* on their return and he arranged the plan of attack and decided whether or not to split the force into detachments. They spent the night in camp and attacked at dawn, at a trumpet signal. Neither the king nor *ombiasy* took part in the actual fighting. If the village surrendered with little or no resistance it was not looted or even fined, but was taken as a vassal. If the resistance was fierce and the attackers lost heavily, all the men were killed and the women and children enslaved. As a special severity the men's heads were cut off and hung up in the village for the hawks to eat. In rare cases the tomb of an enemy village was also burned, but this showed unusual rancor. The spoils were divided on the return of the party, the rules being much the same as in the southern division except that the *ombiasy* had first choice of the loot. No ceremonies attended the return.

If a village accepted vassalage, the heads of all the families in it went through a ceremony of submission. Water was prepared in a bowl with the same ingredients as for the oath of blood brotherhood. A spear was held in this head down, all the family heads grasping the shaft with the right hand. If there was not room enough for all, some of them held the left hands of those grasping the spear. The *ombiasy* of the victors tapped the shaft with a knife, repeating the blessings and curses of the blood brotherhood oath, except that the victors remained unbound by the agreement. An ox was killed and after taking the oath the family heads ate pieces of the liver. No ceremony attended its killing and it was not considered a sacrifice. Vassal villages paid no tribute but were expected to assist their overlords in war.

In addition to the regular war parties small slave-stealing raids were rather common. Sometimes as few as two warriors would go to a village and lie in wait near the spring, seizing a woman or child and carrying it off. There was usually a pursuit and the practice

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608 791 of each with a sharp knife. Each man takes a piece of raw ginger root and smears it with his own blood. They face each other and each covers the other's eyes with his left hand while he places the ginger root in the other's mouth with his right. They do this simultaneously, repeating together: "May you also become blind if you are a traitor to me." The *ombiasy* then takes a leaf of the *longoja* plant and pulls it into two pieces lengthwise, saying: "If either of you is a traitor, may his body be torn in two like this leaf, so that one part will be on the east coast of this island and the other on the west." Half the leaf is laid on the eastern and half on the western side of the house. Then the oath brothers pay the *ombiasy* and witnesses, and name and point out to each other the members of their families.

The above account was obtained from Ratzakoba, an *ombiasy* of the Zafindiamanana gens of the Tanala Menabe, and is a description of a particular ceremony which he had himself directed. Accounts obtained from other *ombiasy* indicate that each one has his own formula, although all of these conform to a definite pattern. The use of the rice winnower, grasping of the spear, tapping with the knife, invocation first of the gods and then of the ancestors, and the eating of ginger root smeared with each other's blood, are constant. The materials mixed in the rice winnower, the terms of the contract and the blessings and imprecations are variable. One set of imprecations is as follows: 1. May illness come and slay the traitor. 2. May his liver become diseased and be covered with spots. 3 and 4. Same as in imprecations previously given. 5. May the sickness turn and turn in him, i.e., may it be constantly active and attack all organs. 6. May the malady enter him six times a day. 7. May his gall bladder burst. 8. May the illness, when it comes, kill him before he can drink water, i.e., instantly. 9. May sickness spread through his whole body. 10. May all his limbs be broken.

728 796 When a village was captured and reduced to vassalage the heads of the lineages and more important families were required to take an oath of loyalty to the victors. This was identical in content and procedure with the oath of blood brotherhood except that the victors remained unbound. The natives knew of no instance in which the chiefs of two gentes had entered into blood brotherhood to cement an alliance between their followers.

OLD AGE

165 Although no vital statistics are available for the Tanala, the life expectation for adults seems to be little if at all inferior to that